1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

The extent to which the order of the *vakuacisoko* exists at present or has existed among the Ovimbundu would be a very interesting subject of inquiry. It is certain that the institution does not exist throughout the territory but only in certain families which belong to the order and pass on membership in it by heredity. Whether there are certain regions where it is or was in the past more strongly held to is not known. It seems to be or to have been more strongly entrenched among the cattle-rearing people to the south, but it is also said to have been practised in Lupolo (Libolo) and even in the region of Luanda.[1] Among the Ovimbundu it seems to have been stronger in the past than at present. Few if any practising members of the set are now known. All 'coevals' or members of the set were in duty bound to render mutual assistance. All had mutual rights to the property of the others without complaint or remedy. These mutual rights seem to have been extended to the extreme limit of having intercourse with each other's wives, nor did the injury or even the death of one brought about by another allow the injured family to seek revenge or legal redress. It was the duty of *vakuacisoko* to bury their fellows, themselves digging the grave and attending to all expenses not already supplied by the family. Theirs was also the duty of burying strangers without family who would not be buried by others fearing defilement or responsibility for their debts. Bastos gives a tradition ascribing the origin of this institution to a wager laid between two chiefs.[2] It seems more probable, however, that it is connected with circumcision and tribal initiation. An analogous set of rights and duties is said to have existed among the Herero between 'coevals' circumcised at the same time.[3]

Tribal initiation for both boys (*oku·lisevi:a evamba*) and girls (*uso wakãi*) is carried on in camps or 'schools' in the southern and south-eastern tribes of the Ovimbundu. These camps are regularly held in Kalukembe, Kakonda, and Ngalangi. Sporadic instances of individual camps have also occurred recently in Viye, Bailundu, Sambu, Wambu, Cingolo, and Cikuma. Even in those regions where camps are regularly held, only the children of certain families enter. It seems that there has been some passing on of the custom by heredity and, in general, there is intermarriage only between families and individuals who adhere to the initiation

[1] Bastos, 1909, op. cit., pp. 67–70.
[2] Ibid., p. 69 f.
[3] Vedder in Hahn *et al.*, op. cit., p. 178.

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

of the girl by her husband, and if she were not a virgin he took a hot stick from the fire and burned a hole through her loin cloth. "The girl began to cry, but she had to take the burned cloth to her mother." In such an instance there does not seem to be an idea of guilt. The husband had accepted something that was damaged, and the payment of a pig by the girl's parents reunited the two young people. In former days, also at present, there are boy and girl companions who sleep together, supposedly without having sexual connections, although they may be seventeen years of age. The girl calls the boy *ombaisi*, and he calls her by the same name. The Ovimbundu understand something of the physiology of conception; the woman is, however, regarded as only a receiving vessel. "The man puts something into her which grows."

Husband and wife do not sleep in the same bed during the wife's menstrual period; the wife sleeps on a mat at the side of her husband's bed. A woman who is menstruating never cooks food, but women give mutual aid in this matter. A man with more than one wife sleeps either four nights or seven nights with each; the four-night cycle is more usual than the seven-night cycle among the Ovimbundu. Each wife has a separate hut and kitchen. There is no wife lending, but a visitor may be provided with a widow or even with an unmarried girl. Then the man would have to pay the woman.

Ngonga was able to give information with regard to homosexuality. "There are men who want men, and women who want women." Ngonga says he has heard people talk about it, and "they think this very bad." A woman has been known to make an artificial penis for use with another woman. The medicine-man will sometimes dress as a woman. Ngonga, who has seen a man dress as a woman, stated that the man arranged his cloth like that of a woman, put palm oil on his hair, and joined the women to pound corn on the rocks. "The other people laughed and spoke bad words to him. His brother, father, and uncle beat him," but without producing reformation.

DIVORCE

There are many grounds on which a man may secure a divorce, but it does not follow that divorce is frequent. On the contrary the evidence indicates that the majority of difficulties are overcome by a compromise between the relations of the husband and those of the wife. The main causes of dissatisfaction with a wife are want of ability in cultivating her garden, physical weakness, a habit of thieving from the gardens of other women, incompetence in cooking,

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

586 bad temper, too much talking, some physical defect arising from childbirth, and infidelity. But the husband usually accepts payment from the adulterer, and in that event divorce is not sought.

595 586 If a mother has no milk, there is a likelihood that her children will die in infancy; this is a cause for divorce. Barrenness gives great dissatisfaction, but is not necessarily a cause for divorce. Usually the husband marries another girl, while the first wife retains her position as head-wife. With regard to frigidity my informant said [833] that sometimes "a married woman does not want her husband to do those things which husbands like to do, or she may want him very seldom." The husband is so angry that he may go away hunting for a long time. The husband may tell some old people, who talk to the girl. If his wife is a good cook, the husband may keep her and secure another girl as a second wife. Sometimes the husband ties the hands of the girl if she resists him. If a wife is returned to her parents on the grounds of her frigidity her husband does not receive compensatory payment, but he hopes that another man will take the girl and pay him for her.

842 Sterility of the male is sometimes suspected, in which case the husband tries another girl, possibly with his wife's consent. The wife may be allowed to have relations with another man in the hope of producing children. The evidence shows that there is definite experiment to test barrenness of the woman and sterility of the male.

In case of impotence (not sterility of the male sperm) the wife leaves her husband. In event of barrenness the woman visits a medicine-man, who gives her a charm consisting of two cowrie shells on a strip of leather which she wears round her neck; a potion also will be given her. If the barren condition is due to malevolence of spirits, the face of the woman is painted with streaks of red and white. Such a woman is said to gain *ocitumba*. *Tumba* means "a swell," "a rise."

586 [837] A woman may divorce her husband if he does not treat her well. If he beats her or refuses to give her cloth and palm oil, she will leave him; but she will not leave him if he is merely unfaithful. If a woman is unhappy with her husband, she will tell her people about the trouble. Her father and mother may say, "Go and try again."

After a year the woman may still be unhappy, in which case she goes to her parents. The husband visits his wife's parents to ask why she has left him. The parents give reasons and offer to return the token he presented for the girl. The return of the husband's tokens is usually long delayed because the parents of the girl are

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

drunk. The concoction is described in Umbundu as *ihemba vioku tundisapo imo* ("medicine to take away belly"). 847

When the monthly period begins too early in life, the medicine-man recommends that the young girl should wear the cowrie necklace worn by her mother's mother. 841

A deformed child is destroyed, but not if it has been allowed to survive the first day. 847

If male triplets are born, two stay permanently with the mother. At the age of five years one child goes to the king, whose child he becomes. 851

When a woman has had relationships with more than one man, she will die in childbirth unless the medicine-man is called to cure her. 837

In a Vachokue village of eastern Angola I bought a female wooden figure. It was explained that this would be nursed by a woman, one of whose twins was dead, in order to induce another conception. Moreover, the nursing of the figure prevents the death of the second twin. The Ovimbundu also use these wooden figurines for replacing dead twins (p. 163). 532 845 842

Children are suckled for a long time; even those of three years and older come to the breast. There are instances in which milk is present but lacking the nutritive qualities; then the baby is likely to die. The matter is simpler when a mother gives no milk at all because the baby is given to another woman, but not necessarily to a woman who is suckling a child. A baby whose mother has no milk may be given to a woman who has not borne a child for many years, and the sucking of the child quickly induces a milk supply. This is agreed upon by informants at Ngalangi and Elende who have seen a child nursed by a woman with withered breasts. Protection is given to the fontanelle by covering it with a vegetable gum which hardens. 853

Near the chief village of the Vangangella at Ngalangi there is a mound decorated with feathers and painted wooden posts (Plate XCII, Fig. 1). Childless women are placed on the mound which is near a river. They are covered with mud, after which the medicine-man sings songs and administers potions. The women go home and are made to sit on mounds in their kitchens. These mounds, which are made in rows, like earth heaped up after hoeing a trench, may be a symbol of successful agriculture and human fertility. 842 789

On looking into the subject of blood brotherhood I found that an exchange of blood between two males who swore mutual fidelity was at one time common. At the present day an exchange of blood is 608

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631 funerals (though these burials could be undertaken by the
564 cross-cousins of the deceased). When *vakwatjisoko* came to their partner-chiefdom for a funeral they had the right to steal small live-stock, such as chickens, or pigeons, but not cattle, goats, or
[837] pigs. An *ukwatjisoko* could sleep with the wives of his *vakwatjisoko* partners without being sued for damages.[68]

631 The ties of kinship and affinity crossed the boundaries of
[602] the sub-chiefdoms and even of the kingdoms.[69] The members
[463] of the three spirit-protected professions, blacksmithing, divin-
[574] ing, and hunting recognized obligations of hospitality to co-professionals from other parts of the country.[70] Again the
[437] caravans were so large that they must have involved people from many sub-chiefdoms, which presupposes a wide range of contacts.

182 It may be said that the picture given here is contradictory and inadequate. How can the existence of large kingdoms be reconciled to the extreme insecurity described by old men? How do the wealthy caravan organizers fit into the political system? What sort of politics were there in the kingdoms? It is not easy to answer these questions owing to the lack of evidence, and, probably, because the kingdoms were already in decline during the latter part of the rubber trade period. Indeed, the impression that accounts of the Ovimbundu in the nineteenth century give is that of adventure, battle, commerce, migration —a vigorous rather than a stable society.[71]

61 The kinship system is perhaps the field of Umbundu society
114 which has aroused most interest among anthropologists. Childs and Hastings have written much that is interesting on the old double-descent grouping but as, with the kinship system, the form has been described rather than the functioning and it is

[68] Informants. The account in Childs, pp. 114–15 differs considerably. For this institution elsewhere in Angola see Estermann, 'Clans et alliances de clans', *Anthropos*, 1932.

[69] Childs, p. 54.

[70] Informants.

[71] Magyar describes the king and his courtiers as being extremely despotic towards the villagers, and states that their despotism depended on their having a standing military force called 'Sons of the Elephant' (pp. 276–80). Later accounts do not mention this, and Childs notes (p. 209) that at the height of the rubber trade it was more difficult for the kings to recruit armies for their wars.

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ended by her death, and can rely on her testimony in a case. Even though adultery is reputedly frequent it is deplored and, as will be shown in a discussion of disputes, a man's hostility to another will be ascribed to thwarted lust for the latter's wife. The conjugal bond is the closest social relation that can exist between adults, and therefore the very type of personal enmity is provided by the adulterer or would-be adulterer.

I am here emphasizing the factors which strengthen the conjugal bond; at the end of the previous chapter I emphasized the strength which the brother-sister tie possessed under changed conditions. The balance between these two ties is to be seen in the way in which a man and his wife's brother are often next door neighbours and the best of friends. It may be suggested that this balance reflects the part-peasant part-proletarian condition of the Ovimbundu, the emergence of the conjugal family with its importance as the working team for the cultivation of cash crops, and the 'reshaping of' the brother-sister tie with the absence of husbands as labourers. It seems probable from the example of the substantial coffee-growers that had the Ovimbundu become full-time cultivators there would have been a strong trend towards isolated households and the weakening of the 'neo-matrilineal' pull which operates in the villages.

It is then the marriage tie which holds the vague, amorphous, kinship system together; it is against this vagueness that the marriage bond appears as the closest and most definite relation that can exist between two adults; and the change-over from trade to an economy based on wage-labour and cash agriculture has been accompanied by a transition from a double-descent kinship system to one in which the emergence of the elementary family co-exists with a certain pull towards matrilineal kin.

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to the post. Somebody said to me 'Lusase wants a fine to be paid so that he can get something from it' (the chief traditionally having a right to commission on a fine paid in a dispute which he had settled). Eventually the dispute did not go to the post, as Kapapelo paid a fine, and the matter dropped.

A great deal of detail has been given here, but it can be shown that consistencies can be extracted from what seems complete confusion.

Kapapelo had, no doubt, as was said, under the influence of drink, decided to carry on his conflict with Sapapula after the gathering at Justino's and had arrived at Sapapula's threatening to commit suicide. The threat of suicide was here used as Guilherme had used it to put an opponent in a difficult position, but it infuriated Sapapula, who decided that he must try and get another hearing. He therefore turned again to Justino, although the latter had previously decided against him; thus implying that even a possibly unfavourable judge is acceptable, rather than let a squabble continue indefinitely.

Eventually, owing to Justino's refusal to hear the case, what I have called a 'moot' was got together, a body which lacked any deciding, dominating figure; but represented the local community. This became concerned with the question of the relation of Kapapelo and Sapapula as affected by the action of Kapapelo in respect of Sapapula's wife Nahoka. As has been mentioned in the chapter on marriage, the relation between a man and his wife's lover is one of mystically manifested hostility. Sapapula by accusing Kapapelo of desiring to seduce his wife was indicating a very serious state of hostility between the two men; and one can only explain Kapapelo's confession to something of which he was not guilty as a mark of his hostility to Sapapula. Kapapelo was accused by Sapapula of attempting to do him a grievous wrong, and Kapapelo claimed that he had in fact done this wrong. Nahoka denied that she had wronged her husband, and produced evidence of her assertion. Before considering her arguments, it must be noted what were the interests of the other people involved in the case.

It might be suggested that Kafelo, Lusase, and Ngombe had to some extent the function of judges or at least arbitrators, and Sapapula had indeed invited Ngombe to give his opinion (I

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do not know how Kafelo and Lunase came to hear of the case). In practice, their role was that of any other spectator in trying to bring about a settlement, although a chief has, as was noted, the right to a commission on any indemnification. The right of spectators to intervene is not based on any particular relationship to those involved nor on any reputation for wisdom. There is in fact no organized routine for determining who may and who must turn up and who may and who must speak. Spectators and speakers are simply members of the neighbourhood community, some related to Sapapula, some simply fellow-villagers, and it is natural that in present Umbundu society, lacking clearly-defined social groups, the crowd that assembles on such an occasion should look like a chance gathering. Its lack of recognized procedure, of accepted leadership, and of specific criteria of recruitment are all typical of the neighbourhood community among the contemporary Ovimbundu.

Despite the 'unorganized' character of this gathering, there exists evidently a set of generally accepted symbolic values, which are accepted by Christian and pagan, by young and old. Thus Nahoka claimed as evidence that she had not committed adultery her meal with Kapapelo's wife, and the latter in turn offered as evidence that adultery had been committed a statement that her husband had made a gift of soap to Nahoka. These actions provide presumptive evidence of innocence or guilt since an adulterer or adulteress may not eat under apparently mystical sanctions with the spouse of the person with whom he or she has committed adultery, and the giving of gifts by a man to a woman implies a sexual relationship. These actions were presumably recognized as convincing evidence in the days when there existed a formal court system, and continue to be recognized as such at the present day.

The nature of contemporary social relations, as being the end-product of a series of acts between individuals rather than as the content of jural norms defined by status, is also revealed in the dispute, particularly in the episode at Justino's. Sapapula does not complain that Kapapelo had not behaved as a villager should to his headman, but that he had not been grateful for having been given land. Kapapelo's complaint that Saviel, Sapapula's sister's son, had attempted to seduce his wife was,

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like his accusation that Sapapula had incited Jaime to kill him, an attempt to portray himself not as an ungrateful recipient of Sapapula's goodness but a much suffering victim of his malevolence.

Although the moot reflects the existing social structure and values there are occasional reminiscences of the former social system. Thus Ngombe seems to have been acting according to a traditional but non-effective pattern in giving a long, judicial, summing up, which had no practical effect. Again, when Sapapula accused Kapapelo of wishing to break up the village it is probable that he was thinking of the old villages socially defined by the agnatic tie and physically enclosed by a stockade rather than the physically and socially amorphous villages of the present day. Values such as these survive in the minds of individuals when the associated social forms have disintegrated. They are brought out on occasions analogous to those in which they were formerly used, but are not nowadays decisive in the way they would have been.

The quarrel between Kapapelo and Sapapula is different from the other cases, since the meeting held to discuss it is held without the presence of a 'civilized' person and it pivots about a question of adultery or rather attempted adultery, a subject which has hitherto appeared marginally as a subject for insults. The case is held without the presence of a 'civilized' person, and this is from necessity, not from choice. Sapapula had tried to have the case heard by Justino, and Kapapelo was eventually brought to terms by Sapapula's threat to refer the matter to the post. While the moot shows us the community acting to uphold social control, such action is regarded as an unsatisfactory substitute for a decision by somebody who could, as Gonçalve said of Antonio Pires, 'leave with the words', that is, settle the case.

Adultery has previously occurred as an accusation thrown in during a squabble that has begun with something else. Thus Guilherme accused Paulo and Wasuka accused Kapapelo of adultery because they were angry with them; they were not angry with them because they thought they had committed adultery with their wives. It is parallel to the suggestions that Kapapelo was a sorcerer, an insult not an accusation. It now

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occurs, whether in intention as declared by Sapapula and Naboka, as accomplished as claimed by Kapapelo, as the substance of the conflict between the two men.

To sum up, Kapapelo had originally been aligned with his kinsman Guilherme against Sapapula, who had then shown hostility to Kapapelo, and especially to his wife's brother Kusumula. The latter had counter-attacked by accusing Sapapula before Justino, and there the matter might have rested if Kapapelo had not tried to attack Sapapula again, by making the threat to commit suicide at his kitchen door. This led to the moot at which the charge of attempted adultery was made, and at which Sapapula intended to, and succeeded in, taming Kapapelo.

4. *Lusase, Sapapula, and Luanga*

In this case, individuals previously met, notably Sapapula, and Lusase reappear, this time as enemies. The principal scenes are first an attempt by a kinsman of Lusase's to recover a debt from Sapapula, secondly an attack by Lusase on Sapapula, thirdly a decision by the *chefe de posto* in favour of Sapapula, fourthly a fresh complaint to the post by Luanga against Lusase, fifthly a post decision in favour of Luanga, sixthly and finally reconciliation of Luanga and Lusase.

This chain of disputes had begun actually before the episodes mentioned in the last case. On the 19th February, Ndonga a kinsman of Lusase (whom he had helped to power), arrived in Epalanga and tied up Sapapula, as a result of the latter not paying a debt. I produced the money and for the present no more was heard of it. Lusase said that he did not know what went on in the villages, when the matter was mentioned to him.

On 13th May, Simbwyikoka, a former chief whose village was near Sapapula's, was holding a ceremony in which a bull had been killed. Sapapula had taken part in the ceremony and had been responsible for sending a leg of the bull (the chief's traditional prerogative) not to Lusase but to Kafelo, who, although he had been deposed in 1954, had the advantage over Lusase of having passed through the royal rituals, and

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on good terms with Guilherme, who was a 'father' of his, and even earlier in June part of the celebrations which marked the marriage of Paulo's son Jose to Pungu, a girl from Namba, whose mother had at one time been married to Kapapelo, took place at the latter's house. Most strikingly of all, as has been noted, Guilherme could borrow money from Bartolomeu and Paulo at the height of their quarrel. The kinship bond exists outside of and, it might be said, at a deeper level than, the quarrel, and the rebukes hurled at an adversary reflect this. Paulo did not complain that Guilherme was a bad cross-cousin; instead he complained that Guilherme was not grateful to him for having baptised his dying child. The motive for co-operation or conflict in everyday life is to be found not in the tracing of genealogies but in the tally of reciprocal services and grievances between two individuals.

It may be claimed that this portrait of the kinship system which emerges from the disputes as being loosely structured and lacking defined obligations, but providing an underlying continuity, is very similar to that given in Chapter VII, which was based on questioning and the observation of everyday life.

The significance of the conjugal bond appears both positively in the way Luanga and Sapapula both take their wives to the post as witnesses, and negatively in the way the hostility of Kapapelo and Lusase to Sapapula is interpreted as being inspired by lust for his wife. Even the accusations of adultery so readily hurled about in disputes reflect the stereotype of the adulterer as the arch-enemy, and likewise the arch-enemy of the moment as at least a potential adulterer.

One question remains to be answered. Was Epalanga a particularly rebellious, squabbling, divided, village, because of the presence of an unusual number of aggressive individuals? It is not possible to estimate the number of disputes per village, and the disputes which have been described were the most important of which I had personal knowledge. They were touched off by personal antagonisms rather than by structural contradictions. Yet they tie in with what has been said of the Umbundu social structure in earlier chapters to such a degree that they seem to reflect the lines along which any case of the sort would proceed. The weakness of the chiefs, stripped of